



HOW TO BUILD ON THIS WORK

PROCESS OVERVIEW

The development of these Shelter Standards has been a deeply collaborative effort, aiming to create a robust framework that addresses the unique challenges faced by women and gender-diverse individuals accessing emergency shelters across Canada. Throughout the development process, a variety of methods were employed to gather input and ensure inclusivity:

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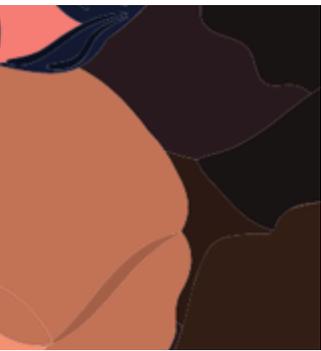
Guidance from a National Advisory Committee: A national advisory committee provided consistent guidance, drawing on their expertise and diverse perspectives to inform the development of the standards.

2

Engagement with Lived Experts and Service Providers: Multiple rounds of focus groups and interviews were conducted with individuals with lived experiences of accessing emergency shelters, as well as service providers. This direct engagement ensured that the standards were informed by real-world experiences and needs.

3

National Survey: A national survey was conducted to gather input from a wide range of stakeholders, further enriching the understanding of the challenges and priorities related to emergency shelter services.



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4

Desk Research: The project team undertook a comprehensive desk research phase, ensuring that alongside the focus groups, our findings were also informed by existing literature, evidence, and broader contextual realities.

5

Thematic Analysis: After our focus groups, we delved into an analysis of the prominent themes that emerged throughout these discussions. This step allowed us to discern recurring patterns, challenges, solutions and narratives, which subsequently informed our scenario drafting process.

6

Developing Before and After Scenarios: A crucial part of our process aimed at illustrating the impact of implementing rights-based and gender-sensitive standards in emergency shelters. The "before scenarios" were developed after our series of focus groups and aimed to capture the challenges and barriers women and gender-diverse people face when accessing shelter, as well as the barriers service providers face in implementing a gender-sensitive, rights-based approach to their practice. The "after scenarios" were developed after engagements where participants outlined a vision for an alternate future, where women and gender-diverse people are more able to have their rights upheld when navigating the shelter system. These scenarios provide a vivid comparison between the current state of shelter access and a future where the proposed standards have been fully realized.

7

Future-Casting Exercise: A future-casting exercise was undertaken to gather input on the implementation of the standards, providing insights into potential challenges and opportunities in the practical application of the guidelines.

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KEY LESSONS TO BE REPLICATED

Bringing together a National Advisory Committee: The formation of a National Advisory Committee played a crucial role in informing the development of the *National Human Rights-Based, Gender-Sensitive Shelter Standards*. The Advisory Committee was comprised of individuals from various backgrounds, including lived experts, service providers, legal and policy experts, and advocates. They were engaged at multiple stages of the project, from initial conceptualization to final review. By providing regular feedback and insights, the Advisory Committee helped shape key decisions throughout the development process. Their input was instrumental in identifying gaps, prioritizing issues, and ensuring that the standards were both practical and aspirational. The committee fostered a collaborative environment where open dialogue and mutual respect were paramount – an approach which not only enriched the development process but also built a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the work.

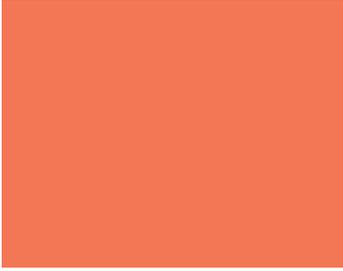
Iterative Approach and Early Feedback: Engaging participants in two rounds of edits and embracing imperfection in the initial standards draft allowed for the project team to gather valuable early feedback. This iterative process fostered a collaborative environment, allowing participants to contribute meaningfully to the refinement of the standards.

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KEY LESSONS TO BE REPLICATED

Visualization of Impact: Implementing before-and-after scenarios simultaneously provided stakeholders with a tangible representation of the standards' potential impact on day-to-day operations in shelters. This narrative approach likely enhanced stakeholders' comprehension and engagement, facilitating a more informed discussion and decision-making process.

Investment in Relationship Building: The intensive relationship-building efforts undertaken by the project team resulted in significant buy-in from community. By fostering strong relationships, the team created a supportive and collaborative environment conducive to achieving project objectives. Concretely, the result of those relationships was that most reviewers went directly into the draft to make revisions instead of providing high-level feedback.



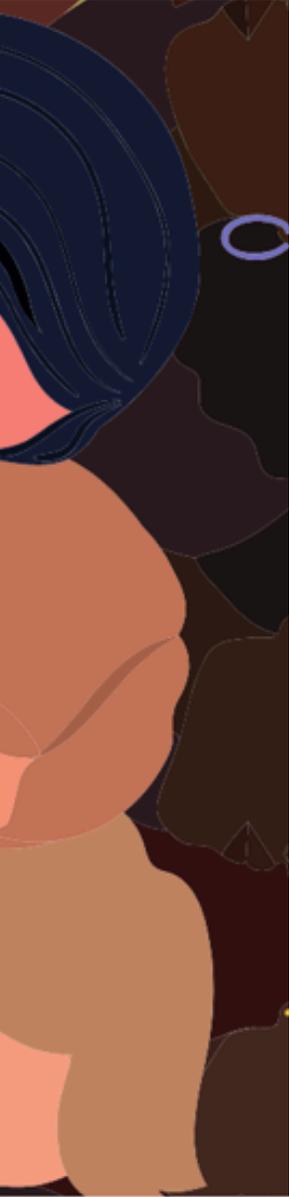
KEY LESSONS FOR FUTURE WORK



Deeper Regional Engagement and Project Leadership in Quebec: In reflection, the project would have benefited from more significant partnerships in Quebec. While some partners from Quebec engaged in review of the standards, we would have benefited from additional resources for translation and specific regional implementations to ensure that the standards would be relevant and applicable across diverse linguistic contexts.

Deeper Engagement with Black, Racialized, and Immigrant Communities: The project would have benefited from more significant partnerships and engagements with Black, racialized, and immigrant communities. While some organizations representing these communities participated in the review process, additional resources and targeted outreach would have ensured that the standards addressed the specific needs and challenges faced by these groups. In future projects, prioritizing engagement with Afro-Indigenous, African, Caribbean, Black, racialized and migrant communities will be crucial to ensure that the standards are inclusive and responsive to their unique circumstances.

Comprehensive Expertise in Shelter Operations: The absence of a project team member with expertise in shelter operations, including funding mechanisms and implementation challenges, was identified as a challenge. This likely hindered the drafting process and may have resulted in standards that were less practical or feasible for implementation. This was addressed by engaging advisory members with that expertise but took additional labour. In future projects, ensuring diverse expertise among team members could mitigate this issue.



KEY LESSONS FOR FUTURE WORK

Timing and Capacity Challenges: Scheduling review by partners during fiscal year-end months (March/April) proved to be a challenge due to reduced capacity among participants. This timing constraint may have impacted the quality of engagement and feedback received during these sessions. To optimize participation and contribution, future projects should consider scheduling sessions during periods of higher capacity and availability.

Starting Engagements with Framework of Standards: It would have been advisable to start the project with an outline of the standards (rather than the thematic areas), to give participants in early presentations more context on where the project was heading.

Resource Allocation for Standards Development: In reflection, it would have been beneficial to prioritize funding for the standards development process over other deliverables. Developing the standards took significant staff hours, and it would have been beneficial to produce fewer surrounding materials and allocate more hours to the standards themselves. In future projects, reallocating resources to focus more directly on standards development could enhance the effectiveness and impact of the project.

“Advancing the Right to Housing for Women & Gender-Diverse Persons: Developing National Rights-Based Shelter Standards using a GBA+ Framework” is a project that received funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) under the [NHS Solutions Labs](#), however, the views expressed are the personal views of the author and CMHC accepts no responsibility for them.

